

A Cleric's Desperation by RobinPlaysTrumpet15

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Summary:

Will is stuck... here... somewhere. It's dark and cold and covered in slime, and there's a monster stalking him wherever he goes. Without the party, what's a cleric to do to get himself back home without any real magic at all?

1. Wishing for a Thirteen

“It was a seven.”

“What?”

“The roll. It was a seven. The demogorgon - it got me.”

Mike didn't say anything, just looked at Will for a second, his features pulled into a confused expression.

“Well,” Will said, pushing off on his bike, “see you tomorrow.”

*

Friends don't lie. Keeping the truth about the roll from Mike wouldn't have been an outright lie, especially since the campaign had been interrupted by Mike's mom, but it still wouldn't have been right. Lies of omission were still lies after all.

And friends don't lie.

So Will had just been truthful. Dustin and Lucas would probably kill him for that come next weekend when they started the campaign up again, but it didn't matter. Will would feel good in the knowledge that he had played fairly and maybe, just maybe, their DM would go easy on them because of it, and give Will the chance to do the roll over.

*

“Goodnight, ladies,” Lucas said teasingly as he turned and rode into his driveway.

Dustin called after him, “Kiss you mom ‘night for me!” Then he turned to Will with a playful glint in his eyes. “Race you back to my place? Winner gets a comic.”

Will smiled excitedly. Dustin had a great collection of comics, and Will always liked to borrow them since he didn't have a whole lot of his own. This was the perfect opportunity. Will had just the comic in

mind that he wanted.

And, he knew he could win against Dustin.

“Any comic?” he confirmed.

“Yeah.”

And without another word, Will was gone, racing ahead of Dustin down the street. It didn't take much effort, and he could hear Dustin calling after him about how he never said “go” and playfully threatening to kill him. Sure, maybe some adults would frown upon that, but it was all in good fun. They were all best friends after all. None of them would actually do anything to hurt one another.

Wind blew Will's hair back and away from his face, the cold, early November night air bit at his cheeks and the tips of his ears. Will liked riding in the cold of mid fall. You were less likely to get all sweaty, and there was something about the brisk weather that made biking around town so much more exhilarating.

“I'll take your X-Men 134!” he called as he sped past Dustin's mailbox, sitting at the bottom of a gentle hill in the road.

Just a little bit further and he would be home. Then he could finish up the last of his math homework he'd been neglecting since Friday. Since it was due the next day during his first class, it would have to get done tonight. There were only a couple of questions left though, so it wouldn't be that bad.

He was on Mirkwood when his headlight started acting up. It flickered for a second and then went out, bathing him and the road in total darkness. The batteries had probably died. Will had known he'd have to replace them soon, but he could have sworn they should have lasted at least a little while longer than this.

The sudden dark had Will's heart jumping. The dark itself wasn't scary, he could admit that, but when you're riding alone at night, it certainly wasn't your friend. But then the light flickered on again, exposing someone standing in the middle of the road.

Will's breath caught in his throat. He veered to the side, running off

the road and crashing into the leaf covered ground just beside the treeline. There was a stick poking at his side, and new scrapes on the palms of his hands that stung as he pushed himself onto his knees. When he looked up again, the figure was stalking towards him. The proportions of it was off, and he couldn't see any clothes on it, or a face.

An image popped into his mind of the little figurine demogorgon back at Mike's house. This thing looked nothing like it... But Will couldn't help but feel like a simple game had just come to life. At least in D&D if he died, it would eventually be alright and work itself out. This... this was real life. Sweat formed at the back of his neck, his pulse kicking in his veins. This thing didn't need to get any closer to him.

Will stood and ran further into the trees, heading for home. Going through the forest could always work as a shortcut anyway. He and the rest of the party used the woods as adventuring grounds all the time. Will could find his way home... Plus, the dark would conceal him so the person... thing... couldn't follow him.

Except for how bright his vest was.

Will barrelled down his driveway, breathing hard, heart racing. Whoever that was, whatever it was, Will didn't want anything to do with it. He just had to get home, and he'd be safe. Jonathan would be home. He'd know what to do.

The lights in the house were off, and the door was locked. Will fished his house key out of his pocket quickly, and jammed it into the deadbolt, turning it and pushing the door open. He threw the heavy front door closed behind him and locks it again.

Chester barked loudly at him. Will jumped at the sound of him, ignoring the dog as he searched the dark house for anyone. He ran into his mother's room, finding no one there, then checking Jonathan's.

"Mom? Jonathan? Mom!"

No one was there, and... he... he was alone.

What if he lost it? What if it wasn't able to follow him, so it gave up and it was gone now?

Will ran back to the living room, throwing himself onto the couch and moving the curtain to look out the window. His heart beat a little harder at the sight of a tall, gangly gray being lumbering slowly down his driveway. Slow... deliberate paces...

Call 911. That's what he was supposed to do. In an emergency, Will was supposed to call the police.

He raced away from the window, into the kitchen, picking up the phone from its place on the wall hook and dialed the number unsteadily.

Static. The phone didn't even ring once.

"Hello?" He asks the static. "Hello?!"

Heavy footsteps stomp across the porch, a shadow falling against the glass of the door.

Chester kept barking, backing closer to Will and away from the door. Suddenly the deadbolt flicked open, unlocking the door.

Will dropped the phone and headed for the back door with abandon. He threw it open, the doorknob slamming into the panelling of the wall, and then nearly crashed through the screen door on the porch. His feet pounded down the steps and across the grass of his backyard, straight into the shed. He yanked the chain of the light to turn on the singular bulb swaying in the middle of the cramped space, fumbling around for the rifle they kept out here with the box of ammo.

Cast Fireball!

The sound of the bullets cascading across the workbench sent panic racing through Will's veins. That thing would hear him... He tried to keep his fingers steady as he loaded the gun, dropping the small pieces of brass again and again, before finally getting them where they needed to be. This wasn't a magic spell to make a monster burst into flames, but... it was better than nothing.

He held it up, aiming it just the way he'd been shown, waiting for that thing to come through the door. He couldn't miss... he couldn't miss... he's too close to be able to miss...

Will tried to steady his breath, his lungs not wanting to cooperate. He was shaking all over, his heart beating erratically out of time. The chill of the air that had felt so pleasant not five minutes ago now had Will on edge. His fingers felt half frozen, his eyes brimming with hot, frightened tears...

He should have stayed at Mike's. He should have asked to spend the night...

He shouldn't have left.

The light flickered.

Then it went out.

Will's breath stopped cold in his chest.

A weird, animalistic gurgling sound came from out of nowhere behind him. Will turned, his eyes going wide, seeing the thing behind him in the shed. Suddenly its face opened up, letting out a blood curdling screech that has Will screaming back at it, dropping the rifle to the floor. The light came back on, growing brighter and brighter as Will tried to unstick his feet from the floor and just. *Move!*

Cold, clammy claws wrapped around his arm, and the world went dark.

The air was suddenly close, and sharp, an unforgiving scent surrounding him. The feeling of slime all over the floor he finds himself collapsed onto has him cringing inwardly and wondering what happened.

2. Get Back

The floor was slimy and slick. Will turned his head side to side, eyes scanning the small area for the... thing... monster, that had been with him not two seconds ago. It seemed to be gone. Nowhere in sight.

Will stood, his hands connected to the floor by long strings of the slimy sticky stuff that smelled rotten and gross. He wiped it off on his pants. The small space was suddenly otherworldly, in disarray and messy, like Will was looking through some alternate dimension spyglass. Whatever that monster did, it left their shed looking like an entirely different world.

Will had to hide before it came back.

It couldn't find him again. Will didn't want it to.

He spun around and pushed the shed door open slowly, peeking out cautiously as much as he dared. It could have been sitting on the other side of the door, just waiting for Will to show himself and then eat him whole... Will hadn't liked the look of its... face flaps, with its yellowed teeth protruding from every available area of skin flesh.

But the world beyond was just like the inside of the shed. Awful black vines snaking across the ground and up the sides of his house, which now looked abandoned. It had always looked a little run down, but now it seemed as if no one had lived there in quite awhile.

The monster wasn't there. Will paced forward quickly, hoping the inside of his house was better off than out here.

The screen door didn't even squeal as he pulled it open and made his way into the kitchen. There was so much slime on the hinges. The kitchen door was closed now, though he thought he'd left it open...

There were vines in here too. Little specks of something floated through the air, shifting as Will walked. He stepped carefully over the vines, aiming for clear patches of floor. The carpet in the hallway was squishy and damp, squelching uncomfortably under foot.

“M-mom?” Will called hesitantly. There were no lights on, and when Will tried to flip the switch on the wall of his mother’s room, nothing happened. It was nearly covered by one of the vines, and Will was wary of putting his hands anywhere near it, but the more he flicked the lightswitch, the more desperate he became for something to happen.

“Mom?” Will cried. “Jonathan?” He left the room, creeping quickly to the next door down the hall.

It was pretty much exactly as it had been left - a little crowded, a stereo/cassette player sitting on a table by the bed. But now, vines twisted over the mattress and walls, a sort of stale sewage smell lingering in the air.

The light didn’t work in there either.

Suddenly there was an echo of a growling cry from off in the distance.

Will stepped back out of his brother’s bedroom, staring down the hall towards the living room. The cry didn’t come from in the house, but it certainly wasn’t far, and it sounded too much like the monster’s screeching from inside the shed.

Cast protection!

Will scrambled for his bedroom door, pulling it open and slamming it shut. He threw back the blankets on his bed, crawling between the vaguely damp, awful smelling fabric, and curling up again under the comforter.

There was nothing comforting about it now. It was wet and heavy, smelling of rotten crops, or a dead animal in the woods.

Hiding under his covers wasn’t his best defense against a monster, but it seemed better than nothing.

*

The night was long. Will was wary of falling asleep in this place at all, but the longer he laid still under the blankets and the further

away the growling of the monster seemed to get, the more tired Will was. His body heat was slowly warming the small space beneath the soaking blanket, and though that made part of his situation so much worse, it lulled him into a half wakeful state.

Echoes of voices woke Will.

“Where are they?”

A voice... far away... ghostly.

A voice...

A voice!

“Jonathan?”

Yes! It was! His mother's voice.

Will threw the blankets off of himself, scrambling away from the uncomfortably damp fabric.

“Mom!” Will launched himself through his bedroom door and out into the hallway.

There was no one. No one in the living room or his mother's bedroom, or the kitchen... No one there, even as he heard his brother's voice call back with an echoey, ghostly quality.

“Check the couch!”

Will walked over to the couch, looking down at the vines covering it disdainfully. There, in the crease of a blanket, was his mother's keychain.

“Mom?” Will muttered sadly, lifting his eyes from the couch and turning them around the room again.

“I did...”

Will could hear them... So why couldn't he see them?

The voices tapered off, too quiet for Will to hear for a moment until,

"Where's Will?"

Will perked up, looking around the house again.

"Here," he muttered to himself, feeling his throat grow tight. "I'm-I'm here."

"... probably still sleeping."

"Jonathan, you have to make sure he's up!"

"...breakfast."

"...times. Will! Come on, honey. It's time to get up." His mother's voice was moving down the hallway now. Will followed it.

"Mom! I'm here!"

There was silence for a moment. Maybe they'd heard him? Maybe... maybe wherever he was... he could still talk to them. He just had to talk loud enough!

"Mom!"

"He came home last night, right?"

She was in the kitchen again.

"This isn't funny, Mom..." Will pleaded, still finding no one there. No one at the stove or sitting at the table, or searching the house for him.

"I'm right here, please!" Will yelled. "I came home!"

The voices were gone. Will could only look helplessly around at the house, completely alone. The world was only so marginally lighter than it had been hours ago. Not daylight by any means, but still lighter. Or, it would be if all the... slimy webbing wasn't covering every surface, including the windows.

The phone rang.

Will jumped, spinning around so fast he nearly lost his footing on the

slick floor. The phone rang twice before going silent. It took a second for Will to shake himself out of his shock, springing towards it and pulling it off the hook.

"Hello? Hello!"

"Oh, Joyce, hi." Mike's mother. She was on the other end of the line.
"Quiet!"

"Was that Will I heard back there?" Will's mom.

"Mom!" Will yelled into the receiver. Neither of the voices answered him.

"Will? No, no, no, it's just Mike."

"Will didn't spend the night?"

"No, he left here a little bit after eight. Why? He's not home?"

"Um, you know what? I think he just left early for... for school. Thank you so much."

The phone was suddenly silent. No static, no dial tone, no voices... Will couldn't remember ever having heard a silent phone before. Unless one counted old phones he and the rest of the party used to play with. The ones that weren't even connected to anything? They were silent. Of course, if they hadn't been, that would have been unnerving by itself.

He set the phone back on the hook and backed away from it. His eyes scanned the rooms around him as he turned in a slow circle.

They were gone... their voices... Will couldn't hear them anymore.

Something tight gripped Will's heart, squeezing it painfully, his throat closing up against the frigid air that threatened to suffocate him. He fought against the frown forming over his features, willing away the wetness in his eyes.

Wherever he was... he was alone. Horribly, achingly alone.

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The shed.

The shed had to be the answer.

It just had to be.

The monster had pulled Will here, wherever here was, in the shed, so, maybe, the shed was... some kind of portal. The Party had stumbled upon portals every once in awhile when Lucas DM'd, and they always led somewhere cool where they could get a some neat stuff. So maybe this was a portal.

Will could get back if he just went through the portal again.

Outside was still dim and unpleasant, with only marginally better visibility during the day than at night. Will was starting to think this place had no sun to shine, or maybe the sun just couldn't cut through the thick toxic looking clouds overhead.

Will poked his head out the screen door of the back landing, his eyes sweeping to the left and to the right. If the monster came looking for him, he didn't want to be anywhere it could find him...

But the coast seemed clear, so he pushed the door open just a little more and stepped out onto the first stair. The concrete steps were slick and easy to slip on. Will stepped carefully, checking each footfall before finding himself firmly on the little back porch area that they didn't use for much in the colder months. Of course, here it looked like it had never been used once since the day the house was built.

The shed wasn't far, and Will couldn't hear anything. Hopefully the monster was far away...

He sped over to the shed, stepping over black vines and wishing the grass wasn't so slippery.

His heart was pounding, racing. Will found himself wanting for the solid walls of the house behind him, rather than the old rickety planked building he was entering.

But this would work. This had to work.

Will had to get home.

The shed was... pretty insignificant. It looked much the same as it had hours before, with almost nothing disturbed. There were smeared, squishy sort of footprints across the floor that he'd left there, a collapsed dented area of a vine on the floor where Will must have stood on it by accident. Had it done something when he'd stepped on it? Had there been a sound or a reaction at all? Would he have noticed if there was?

He decided that, no, he wouldn't have. Not with as frantic as he had been at the time.

Best to avoid touching the vines again.

At all costs.

Then Will cast his eyes around the shed. Everything else seemed as though it was in the places they should be. The tools hanging on the wall, the lawn mower in the corner, the rifle on the wall-

The rifle!

Will moved closer to it, reaching out, until he realized it was blocked. He could see the muzzle and the butt of the rifle, but there, covering the majority of the gun, was a thick, gooey, almost tentacle like vine. It was attached to the wall, seeming to protect the rifle. Or, really, just make life a little more inconvenient for Will.

It must know that Will wouldn't dare touch it... That he wouldn't have the guts to take hold of the gun and pull it from the grasp of the vine.

It did this on purpose... or something like that.

Will huffed and turned away from the taunting prospect of protection. He didn't come here for the stupid rifle, he came here for... a portal?

What was he looking for? What would a portal look like?

Usually, according to Lucas, they were like hidden doorways, either something as common as behind a bookshelf, or even magically hidden as a thrown away boot or something, but as soon as they were discovered, they would become these huge magic doorways that looked kinda black and purple or blue and white and seemed to move and shift and just radiated the essence of an other wordly *magic*-

Well, that's how Will would draw them, later. Lucas wasn't great at painting a picture in your head, but Will didn't need any help in that department.

But, Will didn't really know how to find the portal... it hadn't already presented itself, and Will wasn't sure how to mess with to make it appear... Maybe one of the tools?

Had the monster touched anything last night before it sent Will here?

It had touched him...

But he couldn't be the portal! He'd know if he was the portal, surely. Besides, people couldn't be portals...

The light had been acting funny last night...

Will turned to the bulb in the middle of the shed and flipped the switch on the wall. It was cold and definitely slimey. Will shivered at the feeling of it on his skin.

Nothing happened. The light didn't turn on, no glowing magical portal popped up out of nowhere...

Come to think of it, Will didn't remember there being any magical sort of feeling last night. Surely nothing he'd expected a portal to another dimension to feel like... Was this another dimension? It had to be... unless everyone died out of nowhere and an entire plague took over the town covering it in goo and death...

That would be ridiculous, Will thought.

He flicked the switch again, hoping that, somehow, it would work this time. That maybe, perhaps, even if a portal didn't swallow him up and take him home, the light would at least turn on and make this

place a little less terrible...

No light. No portal.

Flip the switch.

Nothing.

Again.

Nothing.

Flick.

Flick.

Flick!

Will flipped the light switch again and again, wishing that each time he tried would be the time it worked. His chest felt tight and his throat started closing. His breath came quicker, shallower, until Will could feel tears on his cheeks and blurring his vision. Then, out of nowhere, he was doubled over, facing the rotting floor and coughing.

The coughing came from deeper and deeper in his chest. Will coughed until he thought he'd lose a lung, until he felt himself gagging and his stomach seizing, just in case he had to vomit. For a second, he could catch his breath, then he was heaving again, choking on the poisonous air caught in his lungs.

He curled further into himself, falling to his knees, trembling and shaking.

Will's chest hurt. His stomach lurked awkwardly, rioting against whatever pizza was left from Mike's last night.

Several minutes passed before he was calming down, the diaphragm deep hacking subsiding to choked little hiccups.

Will opened his eyes, peering blearily through his wet eyelashes. Everything just looked like a dark blur. He panted, swallowing against the spit in his throat, then panting again.

A screech cut through the frigid air, sending a spark of fear down Will's spine.

He straightened up like a shot and looked around frantically. His eyes landed on the door of the shed. It was closed, and no shadows moved on the other side of it.

Another clicking sort of growl... it was low. Like from a little far off. Just there, as if far away.

Will forced himself up from the floor, stumbling for the door and throwing it open. He staggered across the grass and up the stairs, back into the house.

Gurgling growl... louder now... in the house.

Back back back!

Back outside!

The house wasn't safe.

Will fell down the cement steps.

Can't go to the shed... the shed's too close.

Run. Just run.

Get away.

Run away.

Into the woods.

The woods.

Castle Byers.

Author's Note:

Thanks for reading! Let me know what you thought, and please feel free to tell me if you found any grammar mistakes along the way so I can go in and

correct them. Thanks!